

VC ECHOES

Volume 12, Issue 2

Valley Central Teachers' Association

October, 2009

CONGRATULATIONS DEBRA CALVINO!



2010 New York State Teacher of the Year

There are no greater advocates for children and education than teachers and teacher unions.

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*VC Echoes is
a NYSUT
and AFT
Award-winning
Publication!*

Valley Central Teachers' Association

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Contribute to the next issue!

***Articles or
Letters to the Editor
should be sent to
Meghan Riley, HS, by
20 November, 2009***

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The VC Echoes is the official publication of the Valley Central Teachers' Association—Local 3076—and is published regularly during the school year. Any articles submitted to the VC Echoes will also be posted on the VCTA web site.

Don't Forget!!



Date: Sunday, October 18, 2009

Place: Woodbury Commons

Time: 7:45 am Registration

Walk begins at 9:00 am

Walk is 5K and non-competitive

Debbie Calvino Brings Teacher of the Year Honors to the VCTA and Hudson Valley

Debbie Calvino's recent notoriety for having been named the 2010 New York State Teacher of the Year (NYSTOTY) has brought a lot of positive attention to the VC Staff and the great work that is accomplished here on behalf of students. Union leaders and Superintendents throughout the Mid-Hudson have expressed excitement over our area of the state being acknowledged for our efforts through our first, but hopefully not our last, Teacher of the Year winner. The NYSTOTY award was designed and implemented forty years ago for the purpose of bringing positive attention to the important role that teachers play in the success of our students. Many outside of the teaching profession are completely unaware of the time, energy and dedication that are inherent necessities for success in a profession that is too often taken for granted.

The NYSTOTY application process is long, difficult and time-consuming, yet Debbie persevered with her usual good humor and dedication to task. Having been named by SUNY New Paltz as a recipient of the 2008 Dean's Award for Excellence in Teaching made Debbie an ideal nominee for the state award. When asked to be a part of this process, Debbie did what she normally never does: she refused. "There are so many good teachers here at VC, why should I be nominated?" My answer was simple: "Somebody has to do it...and besides, if you don't do it, we'll break your legs. Besides, this isn't about you this is about us." Debbie laughed and agreed to participate in the process. Debbie is one of many VCTA members who have been honored by various organizations throughout the years. Many of these honorees are listed on our website's [Award Recipients](#) page.

I would like to thank CO for their post-victory acknowledgements of this accomplishment; however, it is now time for the VCTA to honor its own. Here are some of the details

that were written about Debbie as we promoted a VCTA member for the most prestigious award offered to NYS teachers.

- *Mrs. Calvino routinely selects for herself some of our most challenged and at-risk students for her math classes to shore up their skills and advance them to grade level.*
- *I have never seen an educator more passionate or committed to seeing EVERY student succeed. Whether working with honor or severely learning-disabled students, all children [in her classes] are made to feel that they are important and can succeed. She has motivated the most reluctant learners through creativity and relentless determination.*
- *When I first met her, I had no idea what I wanted to do when I graduated college. That soon changed, when she inspired me to want to teach and help other young people the way she [does].*
- *The same caring compassionate colleague and teacher who demonstrates integrity in the work place, demonstrates those same qualities in all areas of her life.*
- *Debra is an excellent teacher. Beyond her involvement in all of the District committees and programs, she is well-grounded as a teacher and has the interest of her students as the primary focus at all times.*

I would like to congratulate Debbie for both her nomination and her award. I would also like to thank Debbie for her willingness to invest her time and efforts in a process that has brought positive attention to our association, district, region and profession at a time when many of us feel a little less appreciated due our current economic woes.

—Tim Brown

Mrs. Debra Calvino: Special Education Teacher,
Mathematics Teacher, Department Supervisor,
New York State Teacher of the Year!

Teachers have many common characteristics. First of all they have a passion for their subject area and especially for putting children center. Secondly, they have a love for the four seasons of the year. Fall brings a sense of newness to their lives while Winter brings the prospect of glorious snow days and extended winter breaks. Spring brings a blast of light at the end of the tunnel, reminding them that yet another school year is coming to a successful close. Finally, Summer brings teachers their well deserved time of rest and rejuvenation.

Although teachers have many similarities, it seems as though Valley Central Math Teachers are in a class all their own. Math teachers thrive on the craziest things. Making up little phrases and acronyms to help memorize formulas and important facts are a favorite of most. They are sticklers for school rules and regulations and see little to no grey areas when they are broken. Math teachers have a reputation among the students for going ballistic when they catch a student using a cell phone in class. Math teachers have a strong fetish for school supplies, although they may deny this. One last common thread that VC math teachers have, is a tremendous amount of pride and respect for our very own, Debbie Calvino. Our thoughts are collectively expressed in the letters spelling out Mrs. Debra Calvino's name.

- M:** "M" is for the many memories and many things she does for her students and staff.
- R:** "R" is for real person, reliable, and fondly remembered after graduation.
- S:** "S" is for the super duper advice she give new teachers.
- D:** "D" is for Debbie's dedication to her craft, her dynamic presence in the classroom and her determination to see all students succeed.
- E:** "E" is for the extraordinary effort she puts forth every day.
- B:** "B" is for the brave way she leads our department, the brilliant ideas she has to Help kids learn ,the billions of hours spent bending over backwards to make our jobs easier, and for the beautiful way she cares about each and every one of us.
- R:** "R" is for respect. The respect we have for her as our math department chair and the respect she shows us and her students.
- A:** "A" is for A+ Teacher.
- C:** "C" is for how cute she is and how she lets everyone know it.
- A:** "A" is for absolutely, always, paying attention to detail.
- L:** "L" is for the love she show. Love for learning, love for teaching, and the love she shows for others.
- V:** "V" is for victorious. The feeling her students have after passing the regents exam.
- I:** "I" is for inspiration. Her work ethic is an inspiration to everyone in our department.
- N:** "N" is for never leaving a child behind.
- O:** "O" is for organized. As being organized is a key to success.

—Congratulations Debbie, VC Math Department

Animals and People: What's the Difference?

The first few weeks of the school year, if we can ignore the painful realities of NexGen, began with relative ease, thanks to the professionalism and dedication of a staff that brings years of experience to this annual event. As the weeks progress, however, each year I notice a breakdown in the adherence to rules or policy on the part of our students. Like other staff members, I recognize that some rules seem somewhat inane and outdated while other rules seem essential to the safe and efficient running of a school building or district. Determining what rules fit which category is almost impossible. If 10 teachers were placed in the same room to discuss this issue, a general consensus would be an unlikely outcome.

Although we could argue about what rules are outdated vs. necessary *until the cows come home* without one opinion necessarily being more correct than another, I do believe there is a truth related to this issue that should be considered. That is, rules not enforced create a lack of respect for the institution that creates them and the authority figures that are charged with enforcing them. Furthermore, this lack of respect seldom remains static. Instead, this lack of respect tends to be self-sustaining and progressive, making our jobs more difficult as the year continues.

Perhaps reevaluating the lesson learned with Pavlov's dog would be helpful to our cause. For those of you who remember the story/experiment—the dog associated a bell sound with food after a bell was consistently rung at meal time. What would secondary students associate a bell with? Do they get up and start to leave the room whenever it rings, even if they have been previously told to disregard it? Pavlov's conditioning experiment is repeated daily within school buildings across America.

“...rules not enforced create a lack of respect for the institution that creates them and the authority figures that are charged with enforcing them.”

I recently visited a friend who owns horses. Her practice was to open the stall door and walk the horses out of the barn one at a time while holding their halter. While the older horse walked casually out of the barn, the younger horse would rush to the outdoors, ignoring the tug on the halter in its eagerness to be outside. The young horse's enthusiasm to exit the barn was hurting the owner's arm—an arm that was already suffering from a previous unrelated injury. To correct this undesired pattern of behavior, my friend had to walk the younger horse from the stall to the front door a dozen times before the young mare caught on that as soon as she acted up, she got turned around and had to start over. The next day, when the stall door was opened, the young horse was released and walked out of the barn on her own without any need for intervention.

Life teaches us that people, especially children/students, respond very much like those horses. Routines bring comfort and order to our lives, but routines can only offer these benefits if expectations are clear and consistent. Unfortunately, even patterns of behavior that are learned and entrenched in daily routines can be unlearned or broken when caretakers become lax in their vigilant care. If we can recognize this need in our pets, why would we offer any less guidance and support to our human charges? A lack of vigilance can lead to unexpected and undesirable attitudes and behaviors. During the first couple of weeks of the school year I saw almost no hats and the halls were relatively clear when the late bell rang. As the year has progressed, I now see more hats and more students in the hall after the late bell has rung. Who is conditioning whom? One could argue that our students' behaviors and attitudes are not our responsibility. However, one could also question why we chose the

(cont'd pg 6)

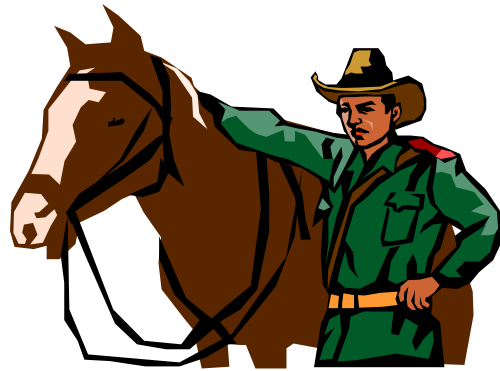
Animals and People (cont'd from pg 5)

teaching field if we do not want to make a difference in the lives of our most needy students. It is our responsibility to condition children to think and behave with courtesy and responsibility—a break down in our efforts can result in increased non-compliance with desired behaviors. Let's walk our horses out of the barn until they understand and follow the expectations—maybe tomorrow our horses will walk out of the barn on their own without any need of intervention.

NOTE: There is no intent to offend any reader who might think that a comparison between animals and people is inappropriate. I am, obviously, a writer who likes analogies. For example, dogs, cats and horses are at the top of the "I love you" list for humans. What is remarkable is that the care we give our pets is similar to the care that we give our children/students. We feed them, hug them, talk to them, spend time with them, take them to the doctor when they are sick and find pet-sitters

to watch them when we wish to visit friends or go on vacation. Some of you may not realize how similar the behavioral conditioning process is for animals, children or people in general, including teachers.

—Tim Brown



SAVE THE DATE! VCTA FALL FEST 2009

DATE: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30TH

PLACE: OTTERKILL COUNTRY CLUB

TIME: 3:00 PM

MUSIC! FOOD! FUN! PRIZES!

Flu Season is Upon Us

The Center for Disease Control currently counts 26 states reporting widespread influenza activity which is high for this time of the year. New York is not one of the them at this time. However, the New York State Department of Health and the CDC expect influenza activity to increase. Both organizations stress the importance of vaccinations to reduce the risk of getting sick. With the regular seasonal flu and H1N1 or swine flu circulating, schools are certain to be affected.

Vaccinations are a person's best means of preventing flu. It is important to also practice everyday preventative measures including hand washing and cough etiquette. Though the severity of H1N1 has been generally mild, the CDC stresses that there have been 49 pediatric deaths since April attributed to swine flu. Young children, the elderly, and individuals

with compromised immune systems are at greater risk as are health care professionals and those who work with children.

If you or a family member does become ill, stay home. Do not go to work and spread the germs. The NYS Department of Health reports that adults can spread the flu from "one day before getting sick to up to five days after getting sick." If your doctor prescribes antiviral medication, both the CDC and NYS Department of Health recommend that you take them.

For more information about the flu, visit www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/fact_sheet.htm or www.cdc.gov/flu.

—Meghan Riley, HS

<http://www.cdc.gov>

<http://www.health.state.ny.us>



Practice Good Cough/Sneeze Etiquette

- 1. Always cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze**
- 2. Use a tissue not a hanky.**
- 3. Discard tissues and wash hands immediately**
- 4. Don't use bare hands for cough. If you don't have a tissue, use your upper arm.**

Recognizing Flu Symptoms:

1. Fever, chills
2. Cough
3. Sore throat
4. Muscle aches/pain
5. Lack of energy
6. Runny or stuffy nose

"Unlike a cold, with symptoms that come on gradually, flu usually hits all at once. Fever and severe body aches are common." — NYS DoH

Regents discuss local diploma phase-out

If the Regents move forward with a scheduled phase-out of the local high school diploma, graduation rates could go down about 10 points to 66 percent, recent figures show.

The local diploma option ends under current regulations that require all general education students entering ninth grade in 2008 to receive either a Regents diploma (score at least 65 on all five required Regents exams and earn 22 units of credit) or a Regents diploma with Advanced Designation (scoring 65 or above on eight Regents Exams).

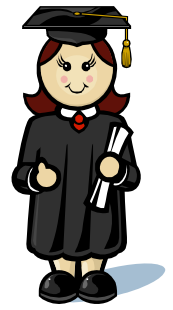
Until now, students who score between 55 and 64 on a Regents exam receive a local diploma. Recent graduation figures show that the elimination of the local diploma will significantly impact high-need school districts and New York City graduation rates.

Regent Lester Young said eliminating the local diploma would increase the achievement gap in terms of graduation rates. Chancellor Merryl Tisch argued for the elimination, saying a score of less than 65 on a Regents exam doesn't signify readiness for college or work.

However, several Regents called it "irresponsible" to raise standards without providing adequate resources and support. NYSUT policy supports maintaining the local diploma or creating other pathways to earn a diploma.

"We've advised the Regents of the need to explore more options for students that allow them to graduate from high school ready for work or college," said NYSUT Vice President Maria Neira.

—*New York Teacher* - September 30, 2009



New dates for state math, ELA tests NYSUT Newswire - 9/10/2009

Teachers and students will face a whole new testing schedule this year for grades 3-8 state assessments in English language arts and math.

The Board of Regents in June agreed to shift the statewide assessments to later in the school year.

English language arts exams will be administered April 26-28, rather than in January. Math will be given May 5-7, rather than in March.

The speedy implementation has prompted some complaints from districts and administrators, many of whom had already set and printed 2009-10 calendars.

Some districts had already scheduled spring break during the week before the new

ELA assessment date, meaning students would take the exam the first day back from vacation.

State Education Department officials said the testing could not be shifted any later if scores are to be available before the end of the school year. The Regents agreed that getting test results before the end of the school year is a top priority to help districts make placement decisions and get students remedial services.

The revised testing schedule will mean curriculum changes, especially for math. In late July SED released a detailed guidance memo for the grades 3-8 mathematics testing program so districts can align their mathematics curriculum with the May 2010 administration of the Grades 3-8 mathematics test.

Reverse Trick-or-Treating Program

- NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer Lee Cutler is coordinating a statewide union effort to get members involved in this Fair Trade program. Trick-or-Treaters hand out small Fair Trade chocolate bars with a card promoting the use of fairly traded products. Reverse Trick-or-Treating kits are free; participants pay only shipping costs.
- If you are interested, go to www.reversetrickortreating.org to request your kit.
- Hurry! The deadline for individuals to request a kit is 13 October 2009!

President's Opinion: NexGen—Who's Responsible?

The adoption of NexGen as the VSCD's student management system was an obvious mistake. The features provided by this program would be hard-pressed to compete with archaic Apple IIe programs with regard to attendance, grade book options and the printing of essential reports. How was this program selected? Did NexGen sell the school a false bill of goods like slick snake oil salesmen?

At a recent workshop, a NexGen representative offered a disturbing answer to many of our members' questions: "...that feature would represent an enhancement." I liken our situation to a consumer ordering a car, paying full price, and receiving only the frame. When asked where the rest of the car is: the salesperson responds: *I'm sorry, but we never designed the car with wheels, seats, engine, etc. Those features would represent an enhancement.*

Did NexGen offer the District a first year cut-rate price for the opportunity to get its foot in the door in our area? If they did, we seem to have certainly got what we paid for...but wouldn't it be great to have a car with an engine and steering wheel instead? Based on the number of tasks NexGen cannot accomplish or cannot accomplish correctly, users have no choice but to question NexGen's competence and foresight in the creation of this student management system. NexGen seems to compare (less favorably) to P.T Barnum's Cardiff Giant—except dollars spent on NexGen belong to taxpayers as opposed to Barnum's *sucker born every minute*.

What about the time added to staff workloads that were supposed to be lightened due to the "wonderful" features this new student management system was to provide to our district? Will staff members be permitted to submit a bill to NexGen for the additional hours of time spent performing what should have been basic or routine tasks? Was this added work expected and anticipated? Was this part of a deal reached with NexGen—that VC staff would be sacrificed as guinea pigs for a new and underdeveloped program in exchange for undisclosed concessions?

Should NexGen have had the foresight to pre-evaluate compatibility problems with district and BOCES servers and firewalls? Did NexGen

initially blame the district rather than take responsibility for compatibility problems? Wouldn't this be a bit like Adobe blaming Microsoft and Apple for incompatibility problems when Adobe's responsibility is to create and market software that can run on both Apple and Microsoft operating systems? Currently, simple attendance reports are impossible to generate, grades are added but later disappear, calculations of grades are incorrect and when the grades remain in "cyberspace-NexGen limbo" where they were inputted, generating practical and usable reports is a nightmare at best. Other reported issues with NexGen include, but are certainly not limited to:

1. *Grades are calculated inaccurately when using weighted or total point categories.*
2. *Any Microsoft generated report will not work on 2002 or older software.*
3. *The online manual used for help is for the older version—pre-January, 2009.*
4. *Hot-linking of grades can't be done.*
5. *It does not have the capacity to email progress reports to parents.*
6. *The grade book cannot be saved to disk or hard drive. [NOTE: What technogeek, in his right mind, would make a data program that prevents back-up for uploading if the information is lost? Saving to Excel is not practical and cannot replace information online when lost.]*
7. *IEPs cannot be viewed as promised.*
8. *Historical data is still not present on the system. Members must still utilize SASI to obtain this information.*

Teachers have also reported the following:

1. *After spending countless hours on this program, I have come to the conclusion that it is very user-unfriendly.*
2. *I have now spent over three hours TODAY and have not been able to complete the grades for a single class. This is after going to the training workshop and working numerous days on the grade book and countless hours of frustration!*
3. *The grade book loses grades, freezes in the middle of entry, calculates different*

(cont'd pg 10)

NexGen (*cont'd from pg 9*)

averages (with the same grades in it) when I re-enter the grade book, etc.

4. *I have gone back to Integrate Pro as my grade book. The new program is useless.*

I have been told that the choice of NexGen was a collaborative effort since teacher unit members were invited to be a part of the evaluation process. It seems a bit odd that every teacher I have spoken with claims that they recommended SchoolTool over NexGen ([visit http://www.schooltool.com/](http://www.schooltool.com/)). Therefore, would those administrators responsible for making the decision to purchase NexGen please accept responsibility? As a teacher and union officer I recognize that teacher unit members, when invited to participate in committee work, are considered advisory only—meaning that our advice can be summarily rejected. However, I resent that members' time is sometimes wasted to give the appearance of collaboration for decisions in which we have no real voice. I certainly hope that NexGen can solve the legion of problems inherent in its shortsighted programming project. However, I am somewhat skeptical that a company designing a school-based program without the foresight to include teachers on their development team, as disclosed by NexGen's employees, will have the ability to reinvent this program to be comparable to other more effective student management systems before the end of the school year.

In the meantime, I hope that administration (I'm assuming CO is the impetus behind many of these directives) will stop making decisions regarding staff use of this limited program without first asking staff members how these unilateral decisions will impact our ability to teach within the limited time that is available to us. For example, requiring attendance to be taken within the first five minutes of periods two through nine has no practical merit or logic. It delays the start of class, can monopolize the use of classroom digital projectors/smartboards, thus inconveniencing the district's "do-now" directive for new teachers, and results in initial attendance inaccuracies each period of every day. The argument that parents need to know immediately if students are skipping class through use of the parent portal is not well thought out. First, the portal

is not operational and is unlikely to be for the rest of the year. Second, I doubt parents will be checking the portal every forty minutes to verify their child's attendance when it is up and running. Third, if children are late they will be marked absent until the end of the period, causing needless worry to parents who actually do check. This directive hinders the prompt and on-task start of class which is the biggest determining factor for successful class management (see Madeline Hunter and Harry Wong—I'm sure there are copies somewhere in the district). This directive also causes teachers to needlessly lose precious class time by creating a need to log into the system multiple times as opposed to a single time with the correct attendance. What is the logic behind this directive? Are administrators reviewing submitted attendance every period and searching for missing students? Are they calling late students down to the office within minutes of a *Tardy* submission which, of course, will not work since attendance *corrections* are not required until the end of the period. Wouldn't correct attendance create less conflict with parents than fast and incorrect attendance?

Please do not misinterpret the collective frustration this article represents; as always, teachers have and will continue work hard to make this change work. Staff also acknowledges the parallel frustration that administration has due to the limitations of NexGen. This collective frustration, however, should serve to clarify that NexGen is enough of a disappointment without adding needless and ineffective policies to its implementation. I hope the district has a back-up plan since this student management system seems to have little redeeming value, particularly with regard to the teacher use modules. I also hope that the ineffectiveness of the teacher use components of this student management system is of concern to the district. It would be frustrating and demeaning to staff if the district stayed with a program that has obvious limitations if these limitations "only" or "primarily" affect teachers—unless, of course, it is the district's intention to destroy morale?

—Tim Brown

In the News...

Health Insurance: (*The Progress Report, October 2, 2009*) "Many Americans do indeed die simply because they can't afford medical care. According to a recent Harvard Medical School study, nearly 45,000 Americans die each year -- one person every 12 minutes -- because they are not covered by health insurance. 'We doctors have many new ways to prevent deaths from hypertension, diabetes and heart disease - - but only if patients can get into our offices and afford their medications,' said the study's lead author Dr. Andrew Wilper. Although having private insurance should make this better, high deductibles and other expenses can still result in unaffordable bills. In fact, 78 percent of people who filed for bankruptcy because of medical costs *had* health insurance, underscoring the importance of not just extending coverage to the uninsured, but also shoring up inadequate coverage. In addition, many people who went into medical bankruptcy had private coverage, 'but lost it when they became too sick to work,' concluded a Harvard University study. 'Nationally, a quarter of firms cancel coverage immediately when an employee suffers a disabling illness; another quarter do so within a year.' The 'proportion of all bankruptcies attributable to medical problems has increased by 50%' since 2001, and will continue to rise without significant reforms to the health care system." It's obvious that access to health insurance/care is a critical initiative; unfortunately, by the time the democrats and republicans are finished fighting over the details, any new legislation is likely to be more symbolic than practical for sick, injured or laid-off workers and their families.

CVS Refuses to Use Local Labor After Receiving Millions From Taxpayers: (The following was provided by <http://www.hvalf.org/>). [The HVALF thinks] that New York State taxes should create New York State jobs. That seems simple and fair enough, yet CVS/pharmacy doesn't seem to get it. CVS/pharmacy is coming to Chemung in a big way. The town will be soon be home to the corporation's enormous 750,000 square foot distribution center that will service

nearly 350 stores throughout the Northeast. The warehouse will be spread out over 311 acres and will encompass nearly 13 football fields. When it opens in 2011, the project is promising to bring roughly 600 jobs and renewed prosperity to Chemung County. But jobs and prosperity shouldn't have to wait for 2011, especially since New Yorkers are helping to fund the project. The company recently received nearly \$4.75 million in New York State tax dollars and incentives to build their facility. However, as the building of the distribution center gets underway, CVS has hired a company from Kentucky to manage the project while they are bringing in workers from North Carolina to start building. Workers from over 600 miles away are taking jobs away from workers in their own backyard. This is allowing CVS to avoid paying area standard wages and benefits. According to Governor Paterson's website, Senior Vice President of Logistics at CVS/pharmacy Ron Link said: "*We want to thank Chemung County and the State of New York for their support during the negotiation and approval process. The cooperation we received from Governor Paterson, Dennis Mullen and the team at Empire State Development, George Miner and Jamie Johnson from the Chemung County Industrial Development Agency, and Chemung County Executive Tom Santulli was instrumental in our decision to build our new distribution center here. This is an ideal location to support the hundreds of CVS/pharmacy stores in the region. We are excited to be joining the Chemung County community.*"¹ [The HVALF thinks] it's about time CVS really thanks Chemung by hiring local workers to build their facility. If the company really wants to join the community, they should be looking out for their neighbors. Taking their tax dollars without giving back to the community isn't a very neighborly thing to do. Tell CVS that since New Yorkers helped to pay for their distribution center, New Yorkers should be the ones receiving the paycheck for building it. Send a letter to Vice President Ron

In the News...(cont'd from pg 11)

Link by visiting the campaign site: <http://www.unionvoice.org/campaign/cvs>.

Teacher Prep Requirements Likely to Change: (NYT, 10/1/2009) New Education Commissioner, David Steiner, intends to re-vamp our teacher preparation programs. Steiner believes that a 92% passing rate for certification tests does not accurately reflect future teaching success, implying from this reader's perspective, that the tests are too easy or not valid with regard to their intent. To correct this problem, Steiner intends to promote "teacher residency models...[with]...intensive, hands-on experiences and extensive videotaping and mentoring."

Tier 5: Discussion regarding a new Tier 5 has not gone away. The Teacher Retirement System is often lumped in with other retirement systems when these discussions/attacks take place. The truth is that the TRS requires much smaller employer contributions than other systems, yet the attacks continue. Teachers are also required to have more education and work many more years to receive retirement benefits than other retirement systems.

Announcements: Visit our Announcements page regularly to keep informed (<http://www.vcta.net/announcements.htm>).

- **Fall Fest:** Friday, October 30th. Food, Door Prizes, Music; Otterkill Country Club; 3:00 - 7:00; Cost to active and retired members is \$12 and \$22 for non-members/guests. Sign up with the following building reps:
 - Deborah McKenney—HS
 - Shawn Carrozza—MS
 - Lisa Daily—B
 - Sandy Carroll—EC
 - Linda Draughn—MA
 - Gail Nozell—MO
 - Mary Ellen Raskipf-Kawauchi—W
- **Cancer Dress-Down:** Please donate

\$5 to cancer research on October 16. The following members will collect for this worthy cause.

- Diane Ruggles—HS
- Maddie Brooks—MS
- Robin Scott—B
- Holly Bacon—EC
- Donna Lloyd—MA
- Gail Nozell—MO
- Rich Steger—W
- **NexGen:** Problems continue to abound with our new student management system. Email a list of any complications that you experience with attendance, grading, etc. Some staff are working on a list of everything the new system/program cannot do or does incorrectly. Once this list is completed I will forward it to all members for feedback, after which this list will be forwarded to NexGen and CO. If these problems are not corrected or are not correctible, we will discuss further action.
- **Claims Reimbursements:** Due to fiscal restrictions on school districts regarding reimbursements from the State Auditor's Office, please submit all claim forms from September through January by the end of January and all claim forms from February through June by the end of June. If you were given verbal instructions in the past that differ from this, disregard those instructions. NOTE: If reimbursements are due to grant work, the claim form must be submitted while the grant is active. Please discuss this with CO to ensure that submissions for grant work are timely.
- **VCTA Apparel:** Order apparel online and we will submit orders and collect payment with the items arrive.
- **Richard Aderson "Make A Difference" Award:** The 2009 nomination form is online.

Mac's Musings (from the Retiree Side)...

October comes tomorrow, the deadline for the column was September 18th, same old story, same old Mac and so it goes. It is my hope that the year has opened up well for all active teachers; the retirees are into their autumnal activities: heading south, raking leaves, waving at the big yellow buses. I'm happy to report that the Wednesday morning Rickety Joints Chowder and Marching Society (formerly known as Raunchy Old Men Eating Out) have begun their breakfast meetings at the 84 Diner and have not been asked to leave. The six lads are in mid-season form. Busting chops has once again been raised to an art form!!

It behooves me again to issue the disclaimer that the musings, opinions and assorted nuggets are mine and not necessarily the opinions, etc. of the State Education Department (Heaven forefend!!), the Valley Central School District or the Valley Central Teachers' Association. I do thank the VCTA for welcoming the random thoughts of this retiree and for their concern for the interests of said retirees. We in turn are concerned for the needs of active teachers and supportive of the continued good work of our active brethren.

—Kudos

—Congratulations to Mike Bellarosa, VC's Athletic Director (and a VC alumni!) on the establishment of VC's Wall/Hall of Fame. A super idea! Mike is especially to be commended for the terrific program of induction of the charter members of the VC Wall/Hall. A lot of work for Mike, but well worth it. (Retirees should stop in to the Wall/Hall outside Mike's office). Special congratulations to Sandy Strauss and Bob Jurgens for their announcing and to all the charter members of VC's Wall/Hall.

—A huge round of applause for Debbie Santora Calvino on being named New York State Teacher of the Year. What a well-deserved accolade. Dedicated, persevering, open to new ideas and change, willing to take risks—a woman for others—placing children center. All these characterize Debbie. Another

wonderful example of a “VC kid” who returned to her alma mater and who has made a difference. How proud we are!

—Retiree Update

—The Retiree Luncheon was held on September 9. Seventy-one retirees from the various bargaining units were in attendance. In addition, 37 retirees took the time to write or call with greetings and news. The event at Spruce Lodge proved once again that VC's retirees have remained a vital and feisty bunch. Rusty and his staff once again did a wonderful job. John Mirola, repaired hip and all, was the MC for the affair for the 27th time. He sets the tone for these luncheons—a very special man for all of us. It is also good to report that the infamous Table 5 (you know who you are) has mellowed. Nobody at Table 5 gave grief to the organizer. Long distance travelers included Marilyn Kelso and Carolyn Schumann from the Adirondacks, Bruce Seguin from Lake Champlain, and Frank and Mary Digilio from Florida. Regrets came in from Arizona, Nevada, Oregon, Florida, Michigan, Washington DC, North and South Carolina. The next edition will include some comments from retirees who wrote.

—A Few Reminders

—Retirees are invited to attend the VCTA Fall Fest at Otterkill Country Club on Friday, October 30th at 3 pm. There is a minimal charge. Music, food, fun, and prizes!

—Retirees are reminded to inform Central Office of changes in status, residence, medicare eligibility, etc.

Thanks for turning to the back pages. Until next time, keep pushing back the barriers of ignorance in whatever venue life finds you. Peace.

—Mac



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